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RUEHPOD/AMEMBASSY PODGORICA 0007  
RUEHVJ/AMEMBASSY SARAJEVO 0044  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 LJUBLJANA 000176

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MASS](#) [MCAP](#) [PGOV](#) [SI](#)

SUBJECT: AS ITF CELEBRATES 10 YEARS OF DEMINING, PM/WRA  
DISCUSSES FUTURE COOPERATION WITH SLOVENIA

Classified By: CDA Maryruth Coleman for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

#### Summary

1. (C) On April 10 - 11, PM/WRA Office Director Richard Kidd and Senior Advisor on Conventional Weapons Destruction Mark Adams visited Ljubljana to attend the 20th Session of the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance (ITF) Advisory Board and an Honorary Session to mark ITF's tenth anniversary. In separate meetings with MFA officials and ITF, all agreed on the need to examine future USG - GOS cooperation on ITF funding and operations. The meetings succeeded in clearing the air on some problems that had arisen in recent months and set a constructive tone for future collaboration. END SUMMARY.

#### Past Successes and Problems

2. (C) In separate meetings with MFA Division for Security Policy Director Stanislav Vidovic and MFA Division for the Americas Director Roman Kirn, Kidd expressed appreciation for ITF's ten years of accomplishments and noted that the institution will soon accomplish what it set out to do - to clear Southeast Europe of landmines. Noting that maintaining the positive political relationship that has developed from U.S. - Slovenian cooperation on ITF is important to both countries, Kidd touched upon two issues that had caused recent friction in the relationship between ITF and the Department and outlined steps that could be taken to prevent a recurrence of these frictions in the future. Kidd stated that a recent OIG audit last autumn had shown approximately \$11 million of USG funding that ITF had failed to disperse in a timely manner. Noting that with extensive intervention from WRA staff members, the ITF had now appropriately spent nearly all of those funds, but that greater attention is required to prevent a recurrence of this in the future. Kidd also informed the MFA officials that ITF's efforts on the Hill to seek an earmark beyond the funds that had been requested by Department is, by definition, a situation that highlights differences. Kidd suggested that future requests for funding should be better coordinated.

#### The Way Forward

3. (C) Looking to the future, Kidd stated that PM/WRA is encouraging ITF to begin planning for the day when landmines will no longer pose a serious threat to Southeast Europe and to examine whether there are other ways that the ITF can use

its skills and expertise to bring further security and stability to the region and beyond. Kidd noted that the USG is prepared to fund a study by an independent commission that would present the Advisory Board of the ITF with various options for ITF's future. Kidd suggested that the ITF look to the recent tragic events in Albania as an opportunity to test what ITF could be capable of in the future. He stated that the March 15 explosion of a military depot in Gerdec, Albania, provided an example of the urgent need to neutralize dangerous stores of unstable munitions that pose a security, health, and environmental threat to Southeast Europe.

#### ITF - Slovenia's Parade Horse

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14. (C) Both Vidovic and Kirn responded positively to Kidd's emphasis on the important political relationship surrounding U.S. - Slovene cooperation on ITF and to his assessment of the need for ITF to reexamine its mission. Vidovic stressed that the ITF is a "parade horse" for Slovenia and noted that Slovenia does not have many international projects that have made the kind of impact ITF has achieved in the past ten years. Vidovic indicated that he had felt some frustration with the leadership of ITF due to a past inability to initiate a serious examination of future options for the institution. Vidovic, one of three GOS representatives on the ITF Management Board, stated that the Board has already encouraged ITF to develop a gradual approach to change, one that would explore both other regions in which to run demining programs and other activities such as curbing the trade of small arms and light weapons. He expressed appreciation for PM/WRA's offer to fund the study on ITF's future mission, noting that the offer demonstrates that the USG is truly committed to ITF's future. Vidovic undertook to

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inform the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister of U.S. concerns and suggestions and to ask the Managing Board to issue a statement of support for future steps towards real change for the ITF. Kirn expressed some concern that USG support for ITF may be waning and stressed the importance of maintaining U.S. and Slovenian political will for cooperating through ITF.

#### A Constructive Response from ITF

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15. (C) In his meeting with ITF Director Goran Gacnik, Kidd emphasized the need for ITF to present donors with a clear plan for the future and raised the idea of conducting a study. Gacnik informed Kidd that ITF has embraced this idea and has already contacted Cranfield University in the UK, which has extensive experience in mine action activities, to request a proposal for the study. Kidd suggested that any study should be completed well in advance of the next Advisory Board meeting on October 27. Gacnik agreed, noting that he hoped Cranfield would complete the study by the end of the summer to give the Board plenty of time to consider it.

16. (C) Kidd and Gacnik also discussed the development of a new version of the "Administrative Agreement" which serves as the obligating document for U.S. funds provided to the ITF. The current version of this document is based on a version drawn up nearly 10 years ago and no longer reflects either the nature of the relationship between the USG and the ITF or current best practice for management of grants to trust funds. A somewhat surprised Gacnik responded positively to the suggestion that the document be designed to allow for greater independence for ITF while still preserving some degree of U.S. oversight at the macro level. He also welcomed Kidd's offer to increase the overhead costs beyond the current 3.5% rate charged by ITF. Kidd noted that PM/WRA supports ITF retaining more of donations to cover costs, but stressed that ITF must also be prepared to assume more responsibility for tasks in the tendering process currently

carried out by PM/WRA. The aim of all of these changes would be to place the ITF on equal footing with other grant recipients, while providing the U.S. with both oversight of the funds and the ability to seek the return of any un-liquidated obligations remaining in ITF accounts after a reasonable period of performance. Gacnik also agreed with Kidd regarding his assessment of the recent events in Albania and stated that ITF, already on the ground, was looking forward to exploring this opportunity. Kidd also briefed the MFA officials about revising the obligating document. The aim would be to have the revised document complete at the same time the Congressional Notification requesting ITF funds is complete, roughly at the end of April.

#### ITF Advisory Board Looks Ahead

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¶7. (U) At the 20th Session of the ITF Advisory Board on April 14, a number of representatives from other donor members responded positively to Kidd's opening statement (as the new honorary chair of the Board) in which he again stressed the need for change. However, the Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) representative, Minister of Civil Affairs Sredoje Nevic, urged ITF and the Advisory Board to maintain and even increase its support for demining efforts in BiH, noting that the BiH government has increased its own support in hopes of ridding the country of all landmines by 2019. Egyptian Ambassador Ahmed Farouk, present at the meeting although not a member of the Advisory Board, suggested that the ITF help his country deal with the massive landmine problem in western Egypt.

#### Honorary Session Celebrates a Decade of Demining

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¶8. (U) The 20th session was followed by an honorary session to mark ITF's tenth anniversary. Slovenian President Danilo Turk opened the event, which also featured remarks by Prince Mired Raad al-Husein of Jordan, President of the 8th Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty, CDA Maryruth Coleman, and others. CDA Coleman congratulated ITF and Slovenia for a decade of tremendous achievements in helping to rid Southeast Europe of landmines and encouraged the institution and its advisory board to look at new avenues for future cooperation.

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#### Comment

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¶9. (C) GOS officials were visibly relieved to hear that the USG still strongly supports ITF. Emphasizing the importance of maintaining ITF as a tool for strengthening U.S. - Slovenian political relations, Vidovic and Kirn were very receptive to exploring a new mission for ITF and recognized the importance of doing so in a cooperative manner. The ITF is often referred to as the "Crown Jewel" of Slovenian foreign assistance. It is also a prime example of U.S. - Slovenian cooperation in the Western Balkans. It will be important to work with the GOS to ensure that ITF maintains its relevance. END COMMENT.

¶10. (U) PM/WRA Office Director Richard Kidd has cleared on this cable.  
COLEMAN